1: Linton E-5 (1926-27) 1933 FY8 Tanala FY8



has not been done, the child is not accounted a member of the tribe, no matter how pure its blood, and is debarred from burial in the gens tomb. Emigrant families will keep the umbilical cords of their children for years, sending them back for this rite when some member of the family returns. The Ikongo apparently do not do this and the whole rite seems to have less social implication. Probably both it and the idea of sacred rivers have been borrowed from the southeast coast in fairly recent times.

## DESTINY OF THE CHILD

All the Malagasy have a strong belief in destiny and think that the future of an individual is indicated by the day of his birth (see *vintana*, pp. 212–214). The Tanala Ikongo believe this and put to death children born on particularly unlucky days, fearing that they will bring misfortune upon the family. The child is killed within a few hours of delivery, being buried in an ant hill or plunged head down into a jar of boiling water. Although there is strong social pressure, its destruction is optional with the parents and if it is allowed to live for two or three days it is thenceforth safe. Among the Menabe, on the other hand, the idea of lucky and unlucky birth days is still poorly developed. They claim that the *vintana* ("calendar for divination") is a recent innovation and several of my informants did not even know on what *vintana* day they were born. They say that they never put children born on unlucky days to death, and, although the practice may exist, it is certainly rare. If a child falls ill the *ombiasy* may say that the sickness is due to the child's destiny and bathe it with medicines to change this, but if the child is healthy and vigorous its birth day destiny is usually ignored.

Among the Zafiakotry gens of the Menabe a child's destiny is thought to be determined by its appearance at birth. The members of this gens are normally dark. If a light-colored child is born the mother is at once suspect, but if its parentage is unquestionable, it is thought that it will grow into a malevolent sorcerer, leper or thief. Informants denied that such children would be killed, but I suspect that they are disposed of often. Another gens, the Maromena, is extremely light, hardly darker than Mediterranean Europeans, and is said to have similar beliefs regarding dark children, but I was unable to verify this. Such beliefs offer a concrete example of the way in which a society may influence the physical type of its members.

Twins seem to be very rare among the Menabe, but there is no feeling about them. Being a twin has no influence upon a person's destiny.